



AFP PHOTO

Four of the six Haitian boat people granted refugee status yesterday board a plane bound for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Twenty-nine others were denied political asylum and will be returned to Haiti on Monday.

29 of 35 Haitians are refused asylum, will be repatriated

REUTERS

WASHINGTON - Twenty-nine of the 35 Haitian boat people taken to a US processing center in Jamaica have been denied political asylum and will be returned to Haiti, the State Department said yesterday.

"Six were found to be refugees, and 29 were determined not to be refugees. Those who were denied refugee status will be repatriated in the next couple of days," said Christine Shelly, a State Department spokeswoman.

The processing center, aboard a US Navy ship anchored in Kingston harbor, began operating Wednesday.

Questioning of the 35 Haitians, who were taken Thursday night from three small boats fleeing the troubled country, was the first under

President Clinton's new policy designed to give refugees a better opportunity to argue their cases to be given refuge in the United States.

Those who were found not qualified for refugee status were transferred to a chartered Ukrainian cruise ship, the *Gruziya*, which along with the *Comfort* is anchored just south of Kingston. They will be returned to Haiti on Monday, officials said.

Clinton announced last month that refugees fleeing Haiti would no longer be returned until given a chance to plead their case for asylum. In addition to the 1,000-bed hospital ship *Comfort*, the United States has chartered the 750-bed ocean liner *Ivan Franco*, which is also in Kingston, and the cruise ship *Mediterranean Sky*, which might lat-

er be used to question refugees in the Turks and Caicos islands.

Haitian refugees granted immigration status will first be taken to the US naval base at Guantanamo, Cuba, for further processing before being flown to the United States.

Shelly also said that since February 1992, 16,374 Haitians have been interviewed by immigration officials, and 3,636 have been granted refugee status.

Shelly also released new statistics on the status of boat people since Clinton announced the new policy. Figures showed that 1,980 migrants have been intercepted since May 8. She was unable to say whether that represented an increase over previous weeks.

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